

## Letter in Support of Program to Prevent Child Drowning

May 6, 2020

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senate  
284 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Rubio:

We join together to urge your support for a \$5 million appropriation in FY 2021 to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control to support a program that would make water safety a U.S. Government priority. We write as chapters of Florida Ys, Safe Kids coalitions throughout the state and the Safe States Alliance. The number one cause of injury death in the U.S. for children ages 1-4 is drowning. This modest appropriations request would allocate \$5 million for the following:

- Create a National Action Plan to prevent child drowning;
- Enhance drowning surveillance across the country;
- Devote resources to support water safety education and jumpstart child survival swimming proficiency throughout the nation.

Florida data strongly makes the case for this modest program. The state is already the number one state in the nation for child drowning. During this COVID-19 pandemic, child drownings have increased by 100 percent compared to last year as found in research conducted by Safe Kids Worldwide with the collaboration of its coalitions (attached).

The research compared child drownings from January 1, to April 15, 2020 to the same period in 2019. This was based on the Child Fatality Prevention dashboard maintained by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). The database showed that fourteen children drowned in this time period in 2020 versus seven in 2019, a 100 percent increase. In fact, the day after we completed the report another fatality was added to the dashboard, involving a 3-year-old who wandered off from his mother and was found in a home swimming pool. That increased the jump to 114 percent. Anecdotal information was also obtained by Safe Kids coalitions, many of which are based at Florida children's hospitals.

While Florida's data is especially disturbing, this is a national issue. We fear that the Florida increase in drowning is a forerunner as warm weather heads north. A similar appropriations request was adopted by the House in the FY 2020 appropriations bill, but the Senate did not accept it. We hope you will review this research and urge support for this request among your colleagues.

Sincerely,

Florida Chapter of the American Academy of  
Pediatrics  
Florida Alliance of YMCAs  
Safe Kids Broward County  
Safe Kids Central Florida  
Safe Kids Florida Suncoast  
Safe Kids Greater Tampa  
Safe Kids North Central Florida  
Safe Kids Northeast Florida

Safe Kids Seminole County  
Safe Kids Southwest Florida  
Safe Kids Treasure Coast  
Safe Kids Worldwide  
Safe States Alliance  
YMCA of the USA